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Catholic Historical Brochures—1.

# BLESSED PETER CANISIUS

*BORN MAY 8, 1521*

Foremost Champion of the Church Against  
Protestantism in Germany

BY

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ST. LOUIS, MO.

1921

NIHIL OBSTAT

St. Louis, April 18, 1921.

John Rothensteiner,  
Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR

✠ Joannes Josephus,  
Archieppus Sti. Ludovici.

Die Aprilis 19a. 1921.

The Germans may well pronounce the names of Boniface and Canisius in one breath. (Father Kronenburg, C.S.S.R., Dutch historian.)

He is called Germany's Apostle and rightly believed to have been sent by God for the defence of religion in Germany. (From the Office of Blessed Peter, Second Nocturn.)

It must be granted that from the Roman standpoint Canisius deserves the title of Apostle of Germany. (Paul Drews, Protestant theologian.)

He was in heart and soul throughout a genuine German, and he had the salvation and peace of the German nation unceasingly at heart. (A Protestant writer, quoted in Janssen's "History of the German People." Vol. IX, page 294.)

I rejoiced that I was counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, and to be falsely accused and slandered by the enemies of the Church. I only longed to secure the salvation of their souls, were it even at the price of my own blood. This I should indeed have esteemed a gain. (Blessed Peter Canisius in his "Testament.")

Freiburg's Protector; Switzerland's Patriarch; a Pillar of Religion; Celebrated throughout the Christian World; Admired for his Faith and Prudence, his Indefatigable Literary Activity, his Constant Self-Control and Earnestness, his Ardent Love of God, and his High Personal Sanctity. (From the Epitaph of Blessed Peter Canisius at Freiburg, Switzerland.)

## Blessed Peter Canisius

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### The Reformation in Germany.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Germany, like all Europe, was entirely Catholic. Its churches and monastic establishments were numerous, charity flourished, the divine services were conscientiously attended. But abuses also existed. One might have discerned an overestimation of external observances, a considerable lowering of morals among the people, a certain remissness on the part of the pastors of souls in performing their sacred duties, and great laxity in many convents and monasteries. The various payments made by ecclesiastics to the Roman Court, though by no means unjustified or excessive, were an object of complaint and helped to nourish a perceptible current of anti-papal feeling. Similar evils existed in all countries, but they were more noticeable in Germany. As yet, however, few if any so much as dreamed of a rebellion against Rome or a separation from the Church.

Then, in 1517, arose Martin Luther, the Augustinian Friar of Wittenberg, to pose as a reformer of the Church. He grew bolder day by day. He attacked not so much the immorality among the laity and clergy or the neglect of religious duties, or the carelessness of the shepherds of the flock, as certain doctrines and institutions of the Church themselves. He denied the divine origin and power of the papacy and the priesthood, the Sacrifice of the Mass, most of the sacraments, the necessity and usefulness of good

works. Faith in Christ alone, he maintained, is sufficient for salvation. He declared the Bible to be the sole source of the doctrines he chose to retain. The temporal rulers were to take the place of the bishops and might seize all the rich property of the Church. Many attempts were made to win him back by kindness, but in vain. Finally, in the beginning of the year 1521, the public excommunication was pronounced against him and his followers.

The death of Emperor Maximilian I, 1519, contributed towards the growth of these disorders. For two years there was no Emperor, a time well utilized by the innovators to spread their pernicious errors. Then Maximilian's grandson, Chales V, already in possession of Spain and all its dependencies, became emperor. He entered Germany a few months after the excommunication of Luther and summoned the princes of the empire to a solemn Diet at Worms. To please the potent friends of the reformer he allowed Luther to appear before the august assembly. The apostate friar, backed by his protectors, refused to recant his errors, and the Emperor not only forbade the new religion, but also placed Luther as a heretic under the ban of the empire, May 8, 1521. This act made Luther an outlaw and obligated his immediate territorial prince to proceed against him. But that prince, the powerful elector of Saxony, just appointed head of the imperial regency which was to represent the emperor during the long and frequent absences which his affairs in other portions of his vast dominions required, favored Luther's cause in his own land, and did nothing to stop its progress in other parts of Germany.

Thus things went rapidly from bad to worse. In 1529 Emperor Charles V found the adherents of the Lutheran heresy well entrenched in Germany. He was hard pressed by the Turks and the French, and in order to obtain military help, he suspended the Edict of Worms for the Protestant principalities, forbidding, however, the future extension of the Lutheran heresy. This injunction was heeded as little as the Edict of



Worms, and a quarter of a century later nearly half of Germany had become Protestant.

By the so-called Religious Peace of Augsburg, 1555, the Emperor made further concessions, allowing every prince to determine the religion of his subjects, and stipulating only, that, should a bishop or other prelate turn Protestant, the temporal possession connected with his office should be retained by the Church. Even this restriction was grossly violated in the following years. Germany was drifting farther and farther from the Church, the source of its former greatness.

But there stood already in the field the power which God's Mercy had provided to stem the tide of defection, to defend and strengthen what was still Catholic, and to reconquer much of what had been lost. In 1540 Pope Paul III gave his solemn approbation to a new religious Order, the *Society of Jesus*, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola. Its purpose was to work for the Greater Glory of God in whatever place and occupation the Holy Father might see fit to employ its members. The Jesuits devoted themselves to preaching, teaching, and hearing confessions, and to various works of charity. They at once extended their labors to France, Spain, and Portugal, and in 1541 St. Francis Xavier set out for the foreign Missions in India and Japan.

Distracted Germany soon became a special object of the Society's active care. "All work of Catholic reform," says Johannes Janssen, the great historian of this troublesome period, "which has had any permanence, owes its origin to the exertions of the first three Jesuits who labored in Germany, (Blessed) Peter Faber, Claudius LeJay, and Nicholas Bobadilla." (History of the German people, Vol. III, page 215.) They were natives of Savoy, France, and Spain respectively, which did not prevent them from pursuing their apostolate in Germany. The boundaries of nations and states did not yet divide Christendom in the same degree as now. Besides, Latin was still the common language of the educated classes of all countries. The much threatened Church of that country had

found able defenders before them, it is true. But the Jesuits followed a new program. They believed that the soul of all reform is the reform of the soul. They began by instructing the ignorant, high and low. They laid great stress upon the thorough education of children and youths in religion as well as in secular branches; and by the "Spiritual Exercises" of their Father, St. Ignatius, they guided many to a higher and more perfect life of virtue. Their able and indefatigable defence of Catholic doctrine and discipline made them objects of fear and hatred to the Protestants. But the secret of their success lay in the incessant care which they bestowed upon the religious welfare of the Catholics themselves.

Blessed Peter Faber was the first to enter the empire and he remained there longer than the others. It was his privilege to win for the great work of genuine reform the man destined to enlarge beyond expectation the beginnings made by the first comers. This new paladin of Holy Church was *Blessed Peter Canisius, the Second Apostle of Germany.*

#### **Childhood of Blessed Peter Canisius.**

Blessed Peter Canisius was born on the 8th day of May, 1521, the Feast of the Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel. It was a memorable day and year. On the very same day Luther's doctrine was solemnly rejected by Emperor Charles V in the Diet at Worms. And in the same year St. Ignatius Loyola received in the defence of Pampeluna that wound which eventually caused him to change his life as officer of a worldly army into that of a soldier of Christ. Nymwegen, Canisius' hometown, at the present time belonging to the Kingdom of Holland, was then a "Free and Imperial City" of the empire. Jacob Canees, or Canis, the father of the future apostle, belonged to a wealthy and prominent family. He repeatedly held the office of Burgomaster, or Mayor, of his native city, and was employed in important political missions by the Duke of Gelderland and by the emperor himself. He was sincerely

attached to the Church. A pious mother watched over the first years of Blessed Peter's childhood, and often with tearful eyes recommended him to the protection of the Almighty. When she suddenly died, after giving birth to a daughter, the two little ones found in their father's second wife a genuine mother, who bestowed on them the same love and affection as on her own numerous children. Peter himself, however, became the object of the special care of his new mother's sister, who lived almost the life of a nun in the world. He ever gratefully remembered the wholesome influence which this excellent aunt had exercised upon the religious training of his youthful mind.

The good seed fell upon fertile soil. The child was unusually given to prayer. He soon came to love to assist at the beautiful services in the churches, showed great delight when presented with holy pictures, and learned to serve in the sanctuary. At home he would, as little boys often do, imitate the ceremonies of the Mass, sing like the priests, and even give little sermons to the amusement and edification of the family and their friends. He early began to approach the sacraments. "Woe to me," he writes as an old man in his memoirs, "had I not under Thy kind guidance, O my God, availed myself frequently of the blessings of the Sacraments." It was by these means that he overcame the little faults from which his character was by no means free. Occasionally the bright lively boy was rather irritable, even pert, resented admonitions, and showed more inclination for play and dissipation than his educators found it possible to approve. His stay of several years at a small boarding school, where nearly all the other boys were of poorer families and few as talented as he, made him proud and overbearing. But he evidently did not neglect his practices of piety. It was at this time that he was seized with an ardent desire to know his vocation. To find out what course God wished him to take in his life became the object of his fervent prayers at the reception of the sacraments and in his private visits to the churches. This



sacred craving he called later on the "Teacher and Guardian Angel" of his youth.

### The Decision for Life.

God evidently watched over the pious lad. His father, who himself held the degree of Doctor of Law, intended to send Peter to a higher institution of learning. He no doubt knew of the conditions in university towns, and although the university of Cologne at that particular period had lost much of its former renown, the city was not infected with Lutheranism. Peter's religion would be safe there. So Peter went to Cologne. On January 18, 1536, his name was entered in the register of the students of the Faculty of Arts.

The city of Cologne with its numerous churches, its countless relics of Saints, its thoroughly Catholic life, and its many excellent men attracted him at once and became for him like another home town. He was entrusted to a Canon of the Church of St. Gereon, a worthy ecclesiastic, who made it his practice to board promising students in his house. In order to take the better care of them he even salaried another priest to act as their tutor and look after their spiritual welfare. This priest, John van Esche, whom bodily infirmity alone had kept from joining the Carthusian Order, came across the path of Peter Canisius like an Angel from Heaven. The young student saw in him the living example of the highest virtue. From him he learned to control his passions, to check his impetuosity, to curb his desire for pleasure, to be kind and obliging to others. He adopted the practice of reading every day a chapter from the New Testament or some other pious book. To this kind and firm spiritual father he repaired every night to give an account of the day and to receive words of praise or admonition or reproach. Van Esche did not spoil him. Once when Peter failed to return promptly from a vacation, the faithful shepherd suddenly appeared in Nymwegen and brought the lost sheep back with him to Cologne.

Among the young men who enjoyed the privilege of living

in the same house there was one from Lubeck who was infected to a considerable extent with Lutheranism. But Father van Esche, aided by Peter Canisius, succeeded in winning him back to the Church. The youth became Peter's familiar friend. Later on he entered the Order of the Carthusians, and is known to this day as the learned Laurence Surius, the author of many devotional books as well as excellent works on dogmatical and historical subjects.

In 1540 Peter Canisius graduated from the Faculty of Arts. The question of his vocation, which he had recommended to God with undiminished fervor during all the four years, now became actual. To please his father he began the study of Law. When, however, his father suggested marriage, he firmly declared it was not his intention to enter into that state at all. He also declined to accept an ecclesiastical benefice which it would have been easy for his father to procure for him. He did not as yet know his mind, except that he was resolved to study theology. After long discussions James Canis finally acquiesced to his son's desire, and Peter returned to Cologne to join the divinity students.

While studying the sacred sciences he perused for his own spiritual instruction the works of the great mystic doctor, John Tauler, of the Order of Preachers, and derived great benefit from them. (1300—1361) It grieved him much to see how defective was the only printed edition of these deeply spiritual books. Though only a young student of some twenty years Canisius resolved to issue a new edition, a resolution which he eventually carried out. This enterprise foreshadowed one of the most striking features of his later activity. Years before this time, a woman who was highly respected by the people for her genuine virtue, had declared to him that he would some day render great service to the Church by the composition of books. Another saintly woman had spoken to him of a new Order, through which God would send humble but efficient laborers into His vineyard; Peter she said would become their companion.

While he was preparing the manuscript for the press, Peter Canisius made the acquaintance of a young Spanish priest. Alvaro Alphonso had come to Germany in company with Blessed Peter Faber, of whose virtue he gave the most glowing accounts. He praised him in particular for the ability with which he could handle a peculiar system of meditations and instructions, called "The Spiritual Exercises" which had been devised by Ignatius Loyola, a saintly Spanish priest. Ignatius, together with Faber and other zealous men, had established a new Order, whose members added to the usual three religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, a fourth one by which they obliged themselves to work for the salvation of souls in whatever field the Vicar of Christ would assign to them. A few years before, in 1540, Pope Paul III had given it his solemn sanction. Canisius' heart was burning. He now looked upon the prophetic words once spoken to him in another light. He resolved to put himself at least for a short time under the guidance of the Saintly Faber. In the early spring of 1543 he set out for Mainz (Mayence) where Faber was then residing.

There he soon found that he was in the company of a thoroughly spiritual man, and Faber's hearty friendliness and winning ways contributed to inspire Canisius with unbounded confidence. He requested the favor of going through the entire Spiritual Exercises of thirty days under his direction. "Words cannot express," he wrote at the end of this holy seclusion to a friend, "how much light I received during these blessed days, and how condescending God was towards me. These thirty days have made me a different man." During this retreat the question of his vocation, the object of so much prayer, was definitely settled. "While scrutinizing my interior more carefully, I learned how to pray to God in the Spirit and in Truth. I understood that the mode of life as outlined by the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus is exactly what I need to live happily and to serve my God faithfully. And hearing, like St. Mathew in his toll booth, not obscurely the

call of the Lord I am not at liberty to resist his invitation." Without hesitating a moment he wrote with his own hand: "In the year of the Lord 1543, on the Feast of the Apparition of St. Michael, May 8, my birthday, entering into my twenty-third year, after giving this important matter due consideration, I vow before God Almighty, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael the Archangel, and all the Saints, to place myself entirely under the obedience of the Society of Jesus." Blessed Peter Faber received him into the order, and after a further stay of a few days, Peter Canisius returned to Cologne as a novice of the Society of Jesus.

### First Years of Religious Life.

The Society of Jesus possessed no house at Cologne, in fact none in all Germany. So the young novice tried to make up for the lack of the regular training in a noviciate by works of charity towards the sick and the poor, so much so that Faber, whom he kept accurately informed, saw fit to restrict his zeal, lest his studies might be neglected. During this time he received the news that his Father was seriously ill. He at once hastened to Nymwegen. When he entered the sick room, his father recognized him, but was unable to return his greeting. It would seem that the desire once more to see his firstborn child had been the only force that kept him alive, because he died the very moment that he saw Peter and heard his voice. Peter ever kept him in loving memory and held him up as an example of Christian virtue to his young relatives.

No one as yet knew of the great step he had taken. He now disclosed it to his stepmother, but the good lady could not understand it. She thought him to be the victim of an impostor whose sole purpose was to get the money of the rich heir, and she even used violent language against Peter Faber. But a letter from Faber, full of meekness and charity, disarmed her completely. She not only put no more obstacles in Peter's way, but later on gladly allowed another of her sons,

Theodoric, to join the Society. Theodoric Canisius also became an able worker in the vineyard of the Lord. A touching love and affection always united the two distinguished brothers. When Peter returned to Cologne, three young Nymwegians followed him, two to enter the Carthusian Order, one, the Society of Jesus.

Part of his inheritance Peter Canisius distributed among the charitable institutions of his home town. The greater portion went to establish the first humble foundation of the Society of Jesus in Germany, the residence at Cologne, which soon harbored a little community of eight Novices with Blessed Peter Faber as superior. But the "enemy of the human race" suddenly roused a storm against them. They were to be expelled from the city. Professorships and other brilliant preferments were offered to Canisius to separate him from his brethren. The fact that as students they were under the civil jurisdiction of the university protected them against the worst extremes of the persecution, but they were obliged to break up their common life and dwell in private houses. In the course of time, however, a better type of men came into power in the city, and the vexations ceased entirely.

Though only a deacon, Canisius now began to preach, first in a village near Cologne, then in the famous church of "St. Mary in the Capitol," and the elite of the city crowded to his sermons. But he always showed a predilection for young students, who in large numbers would visit him in his room, and whom above all he sought to encourage to the frequent reception of the sacraments. In 1546 he was ordained priest, a fact which still more inflamed his apostolic ardor. It was not long, however, until a peremptory letter from St. Ignatius put an end to this activity. The farsighted founder of the new Order desired him to devote all his available time and energy to study. It was no small sacrifice for the zealous and successful laborer, but he obeyed without hesitation.

How high an opinion was entertained of the ability of the young religious—he was just twenty-five years old—ap-

pears from the fact that on one occasion his superiors sent him into Belgium to conduct the negotiations for the establishment of a college of the Society at Louvain. He was to undertake missions of still greater importance.

The several years which Peter Canisius spent at Cologne were coincident with a grave crisis through which the true religion in that city was passing. For twenty years Hermann von Wied, Archbishop of Cologne, had resisted the inroads of Lutheranism into his diocese. In 1536 he celebrated a Provincial Synod which enacted the most salutary decrees. But all this was rather the work of able advisers than his own. Goodnatured, weak, yet obstinate withal, in many ways, his deficiencies as a scholar were still more notorious. According to an angry utterance of Emperor Charles V he had not said Mass more than three times in his life, and did not even know the *Confiteor* by heart. During the stay of Canisius at Cologne shrewd Lutheran emissaries won him over to their heresy, while his faithful Catholic counsellors found the doors locked against them. Blessed Peter Faber made an unsuccessful attempt to open the eyes of the unfortunate prelate. Hermann's intention to resign his episcopal office, while retaining his position as a sovereign of the territory, subject to the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne, became more and more apparent. Such a development would have proved a grave misfortune not only for Cologne but for the whole empire, because the Archbishop of Cologne was one of the seven "Electors," three of whom were already Protestant. Under the leadership of the indomitable Canon John Gropper, a Westphalian, the clergy and the university of Cologne offered stout resistance, and Peter Canisius was destined to play an important part in the struggle.

When, in 1544, Emperor Charles V came to Cologne, Canisius was deputed to wait upon the monarch and implore his active interference. As the promises given to him were not carried out immediately, he followed the emperor to Brussels, where he also met the Apostolic Nuncio. Things now began to move. The pope excommunicated and deposed

the archbishop, and the emperor declared his temporal possessions forfeited. During another embassy Canisius obtained financial aid from the Prince-Bishop of Liege, and again went, this time in the name of the administrator whom the pope had appointed for Cologne, to treat with the emperor at Ulm in Southern Germany. Charles V's victory over the Smalkald League, an alliance of rebel Protestant princes, on whom Hermann von Wied had relied, secured Cologne for the Church, and its electorship for the Catholic cause.—Besides Canisius' evident ability the double fact, that his father, James Canisius, had rendered noteworthy services to the emperor and was personally known to him, and that Peter himself spoke the Flemish dialect which was Charles' V's mother-tongue, no doubt had had much to do with his choice as spokesman and envoy, and with the success that attended his efforts. He had thus performed his first great services to the Church and to Germany.

On his journey to Ulm Peter Canisius met Cardinal Otto Truchsess, Bishop of Augsburg, whose acquaintance he had made on a former occasion. The cardinal now carried into execution the plan which he had long cherished of sending Canisius as his theologian to the Council of Trent, which had been opened in 1545 and had meanwhile been temporarily transferred to Bologna in Italy. Canisius there delivered several addresses in the consulting meetings of the theologians: From Bologna, however, he was summoned to Rome by St. Ignatius, and for the first time saw the founder and General Superior of the Society, which he had embraced with such high-souled ardor. To try his virtue the Saint did not allow him to join the community, but kept him for several weeks among the candidates of the Order. Canisius had next to go through that probation which the Institute of the Society prescribes for those who have finished their studies. Then, while many in Germany were urging his speedy return to his fatherland, and while naturally he himself thought of nothing else, St. Ignatius decided to send him not to Germany but to Messina in Sicily, to become teacher of a college class. Without the slightest mur-

mur Canisius went to his new destination and threw himself into the work as if he had never thought of anything else. He also preached in Latin and Italian, and began to form far-reaching plans for the conversion of Greece and other Eastern countries. But whether St. Ignatius really intended him for Italy, or whether he meant this disposition only as another kind of probation: after a year Canisius received orders to come to Rome and to prepare for his return to Germany.

### Definite Mission to Germany.

St. Ignatius had received an urgent request from William IV, Duke of Bavaria, to send him a few capable professors for the University of Ingolstadt, which was suffering grievously from religious confusion of the times. The Duke moreover had signified his intention of establishing for the Society of Jesus a complete college, which would have been the first institution of the kind to be founded in Germany. Disregarding all other petitions St. Ignatius resolved to send three men to Ingolstadt. His selections were Salmeron, one of the first seven Fathers of the Society of Jesus, Le Jay who had formerly been in Germany, and Peter Canisius.

Canisius alone happened to be in Rome. He received Pope Paul III's apostolic blessing for the great mission which he and his two brethren were to undertake. From the audience with the Holy Father he repaired to the Basilica of St. Peter to implore in fervent prayer the powerful assistance of the Most High. "It pleased Thee, O Eternal Highpriest", he writes in his memoir, "that I should feel impelled to ask Thy Holy Apostles, whose relics are venerated in the Vatican Basilica, for the confirmation and efficacy of the papal blessing. I experienced a great consolation and became conscious of the presence of Thy grace, which so kindly was granted to me through these powerful protectors. They on their part also bestowed upon me their blessing and sanctioned my mission to Germany. Thou knowest, O Lord, how often and earnestly on that day



Thou hast recommended Germany to me, that, as the good Father Faber did, I might surrender myself entirely to its welfare and live and die for that country."

While at Rome, Canisius was to take his final vows as a member of the Society of Jesus. Great interior favors were bestowed on him during his preparations for this important step. "While I was praying before the altar of the Holy Apostles Peter und Paul, a new grace was granted to me. Thou gavest me a special Angel to instruct and aid me by his guidance in the sublime life of a professed member of the Society of Jesus. There before me lay my soul in its whole ugliness, disfigured by countless faults and passions. The Angel, turning to the throne of Thy Majesty, pointed to my utter unworthiness, estimating it in quantity and number, to make me realize how little I deserved to be admitted to the act of profession. He emphasized the difficulty he would have in guiding such a soul on so sublime a way of perfection. Then, O Lord, thou didst show to me Thy sacred heart, didst bid me drink from the fountain, didst invite me to draw from Thy sources the waters of salvation. I felt an ardent desire that torrents of Faith, Hope, and Charity should inundate my soul. I thirsted for Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. I yearned to be entirely washed, clothed, and adorned by Thee. Then I had the courage to touch Thy most sweet Heart with my lips, and to quench my thirst from it. To cover the needs of my soul Thou didst promise me a garment consisting of three parts: Peace, Love and Perseverance."

Canisius had never had the opportunity of finishing up his academic studies by promotion to the degree of Doctor of Theology. In the same condition were the other two Jesuits, Salmeron and Le Jay, with whom he was set out for Ingolstadt. St. Ignatius thought that this title would increase their authority as professors. Arrangements were therefore made with the University of Bologna for their promotion. "I was in great anxiety", Canisius writes, "on account of the rigorous examination. But Thou, O Lord, didst deign to give light and

clearness to my confused mind. Thou even didst inspire me with the desire, that my ignorance which in my pride I had wished to remain hidden should be detected." He looked upon the promotion with the greatest religious respect and reputed it a high honor to be declared a professional "Teacher" (Doctor) of the sacred sciences. After the examination was over, we find him again in prayer, and consolations similar to those he had received before taking his last vows filled his heart. "All my patron Saints, it seemed to me, gave me their blessing, and became sponsors for my success and my reward as teacher. To Thee, O Father of all Wisdom, I give thanks for raising Thy humble servant to the dignity of the Doctorate and putting me on the same level with my two excellent brethren." To be a Teacher of the Faith he ever deemed a great privilege and sincerely thanked God for having called him "into our Society and among the teachers, and given me the grace not to remain a dumb "Canis" (dog) but to raise my voice in the chair of Orthodox Faith."

He ever remained devoutly conscious of the divine mission given him for the welfare of Germany. Having in mind the religious plight of his fatherland, he wrote a few years later to the Duke of Bavaria: "There is no land on earth which we Jesuits ought to have so near our heart as Germany." And in a memorial composed for Cardinal Hosius, Papal Legate at the Council of Trent, he says, "Among the German heretics there are very many, who err without stubbornness, without obdurateness. They err according to the manner of the Germans, who are by nature for the most part honest, and docile to what they hear in school and church." Rome, he was convinced would obtain the greatest results by kindness. In accordance with this principle he obtained dispensations, and leniency in applying certain ecclesiastical penalties, "lest the smoldering flax be extinguished." He tried to fill his brethren in religion with love for the unhappy country, and on suitable occasions, for instance when they came to confession to him, exhorted them to pray for Germany.

### First Years of the Great Apostolate.

The three Jesuits found Ingolstadt in a pitiable condition indeed. There were few students of theology, and some of these lacked even the necessary preliminary knowledge for this branch. Among the professors of the other faculties some inclined towards the innovations of the day, and others were openly Protestant. The town swarmed with Protestant books, even textbooks used in the schools were openly un-Catholic. Church-going and the frequentation of the sacraments had fallen into disrepute, and the commandments of the Church were openly ridiculed. The three Fathers were, however, received with great demonstrations of honor.

They began their activity in their own characteristic manner. Besides the theological lectures they gave private instruction to the weaker students, and begged money and other alms for the poor ones. Canisius here learned the High-German language and was soon busy with sermons and catechetical instructions for children and adults. The Fathers also procured temporal and spiritual aid for the poor, sick, and prisoners. The students, at first in very small numbers and to the surprise of the citizens, approached the sacraments more frequently. The non-Catholic and semi-Catholic books disappeared.

In 1550 the university elected Canisius Rector, an honor which he was unable to decline. The teaching staff even desired to make him Vice-Chancellor for life, and after much resistance he accepted the duties of this responsible office for some months. It gave him a chance to impart to the Bishop of Eichstadt, the Chancellor of the university, a clearer idea of the sad conditions which prevailed at Ingolstadt. This office also enabled him to introduce a little more discipline among the students. When admonitions, kind or severe, did not lead to the desired results, he proceeded resolutely to incarceration and dismissal. A new spirit became noticeable in the university.

His renown rapidly spread beyond the confines of Bavaria. Bishop Julius Pflug of Naumburg had been driven out of his diocese, but was able to return in consequence of the victory

of Charles V over the Smalkald League. He most ardently desired to procure Jesuits for his nearly Protestantized flock. He wrote to this effect to Canisius, and although his request could not be fulfilled, it was a blessing of importance to the new apostle to have made the acquaintance of the worthy prelate by letter, as both of these men were destined to labor together for the sake of the Church on many an occasion. The Bishop of Eichstadt wished to send him to Trent, not in the capacity of a theologian but as his representative. The Cathedral Chapter of Strassburg tried to win him for the pulpit of the Cathedral. But all these endeavors were cut short by a new turn of affairs. Duke William IV had died soon after the arrival of the Jesuits in his land, and his successor, Albrecht V, influenced by new counselors, made no move toward the erection of the promised college. On the other hand, Ferdinand I of Austria, "King of the Romans", that is the chosen successor of his brother Charles V in the imperial dignity, was on the point of establishing a college at Vienna, where Father Le Jay was already the superior of a small community. So Canisius received orders to join his brethren at Vienna. Albrecht V later on fulfilled the promise given by his father and founded the college at Ingolstadt. The year spent in Bavaria had been a real school for Peter Canisius. He was now fairly well initiated into conditions in Germany, and had accumulated a great deal of experience which served him well in his later years.

The outlook was dark in Vienna and a large part of Austria, much more so than in Ingolstadt and Bavaria. Opposition to the authority of the Church, contempt for the dogmas of the Faith, and neglect of ecclesiastical laws and usages were rampant. But the king and many of his advisers were staunchly Catholic, and constituted well nigh the only support of the true religion. Canisius was given the task of supervising the younger students of the college and explaining the catechism to them. He also began to preach with so much success, that within a short while the largest church in Vienna after the Cathedral was assigned to him. The principal standard by which he

gauged his success was the increase in the number of communions. He also took upon himself the regular care of the prisoners, and after a series of addresses to them, saw the greater part at the Holy Table. Under his direction his younger brethren gave weekly catechetical instructions in the prisons. The sacrifices which the Jesuits made when a pestilence swept the city, gained them increased popularity. For the poor inmates of the public hospital Canisius had printed in several languages a little prayerbook, which besides prayers contained short exhortations and instructions.

About Christmas we find him on a lengthy visit to an abandoned parish, which for many years had not seen a priest. He preached every day, gathered the children for instruction, and spent the rest of his time in the confessional. At the king's request he was freed from domestic duties for the time of Lent, and journeyed from parish to parish—countless parishes were without a priest—for similar work, undeterred by cold and snow, by the insults and intrigues of the evil-minded, and by the hardships of travelling upon the rude country roads. When he returned the king requested his services as court preacher. Every Sunday Canisius addressed the court in the royal chapel, and preached to the people in St. Stephen's Cathedral.

His next apostolate was devoted to the institutions of learning. The king made him visitor of the university and, upon his advice, promulgated new regulations, which did away with great abuses and diminished the influence of the religious disturbers. Then the king laid upon him the task of reforming two older but very important institutions of higher learning, an undertaking which caused him so much labor, anxiety and worry, that he fell ill and for some time had to interrupt his occupations.

The king's intention was to make Canisius Bishop of Vienna. But the genuine son of St. Ignatius strove with might and main to evade this dignity, and implored the assistance of his Superior General to the same effect. Three times the king renewed his efforts, and the pope was not disinclined. But finally

Ferdinand I wrote to his ambassador in Rome to let the matter rest, "because I do not wish to cause to so saintly a man, whom I love and esteem and whom I rather ought to please, any more anxiety." However, Canisius could not prevent the pope from making him administrator of the important diocese for a year.

During this early activity in Vienna Canisius had won the full and implicit confidence of King Ferdinand I, which was a great asset in his later work for Germany. This confidence enabled him to strengthen the good will of the prince, to encourage him to works of piety and charity, to open his eyes to many dangers and abuses, and to safeguard him against taking or sanctioning objectionable measures. Through Canisius the king learned that his eldest son, Maximilian, the later Emperor Maximilian II, had as court chaplain an out and out Protestant divine. The man was immediately removed, and Ferdinand I gave serious and energetic advice to his son. But Maximilian never became a really fervent Catholic. Ferdinand I, too, despite Canisius' restraining influence made several deplorable mistakes in his relation with the Church. But they never flowed from religious indifference or personal connivance at error. He never wavered in his confidence in Canisius and his reliance upon the zealous Jesuit's advice. On the contrary, he acted upon it at several of the most critical moments in the history of the Church of Germany.

Ferdinand's daughter was married to the King of Poland. Upon this fact Canisius built his hopes of gaining entrance to that kingdom for the Society of Jesus. In Poland, too, the Church was in a critical condition on account of the vacillation of the king. A large and powerful party among the nobility strongly favored Protestantism, chiefly because they craved for the rich property of the bishoprics and monasteries. Later on Canisius was sent to Poland by the pope, and it is partly to his credit that at the diet of Petrikow the aspirations of the Protestants were not realized. He observed, however, that despite the machinations of the great, the people had retained

much more religious spirit than those in the Catholic sections of Germany. He used to thank God for the consolation he had thus received. He thought, moreover, that through Poland the Society would be able to find its way to Russia and the Tartars, in the opinion of the time the wildest of all nations. To win this people for Christianity seemed to him a most worthy object of Jesuit ambition.

But while he thus burned with an unquenchable desire for the defence and extension of the Kingdom of Christ, Divine Providence had already devised another means by which Canisius was to multiply himself a thousandfold in his apostolic endeavors: the Catechism.

### The Catechism.

We have noticed that one of the occupations which Canisius tried to take up as soon as possible was the instruction of children and the common people. It was the spirit of his Order. At Ingolstadt and elsewhere the particular spots are still pointed out in the streets, where Canisius used to stand and explain the Word of God. Right from the beginning of his activity at Ingolstadt regular catechetical instruction became part of the course of education in the university. A good textbook, however, was lacking. The several catechisms with which Canisius was acquainted were not suitable for his purpose. He often mentioned this want in his letters to Rome, but without result.

The suggestion that he himself should write a catechism proceeded from King Ferdinand I. While pondering over the needs of his lands this prince had come to the conclusion that three books were needed, one for the instruction of the people, a summary of theology for the students of the sacred sciences, and a handbook for the clergy. Of course the overburdened Jesuits were to write them. Father Le Jay, then superior at Vienna, had accepted the arduous task, but he died shortly after Canisius' arrival from Ingolstadt, and the matter de-

olved upon Canisius. He confined himself, however, to the first, the textbook for popular instruction. The need for the other two was soon to be supplied by the official "Roman Catechism," or "Catechism of the Council of Trent," a work destined for the clergy.

Canisius first wrote the *Summa Doctrinae Christianae per Quaestiones tradita, in usum pueritiae Christianae*. "Summary of the Christian Doctrine in Questions (and Answers) for the use of Christian youth." The language is fluent, without affectation, and very clear and perspicuous. "The book," says a Protestant critic, "is a wonder of brevity, precision, and teachability." The terms, statements, and admonitions used in it are almost exclusively drawn from the Bible and the great doctors of the Church, and are most dexterously woven together. Although there is a perfect unity of style, one feels all through the little book, that it is not Canisius who speaks but the Church and her authorities. This method supposes in the author an astounding familiarity with the productions of patristic literature.

The *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* was written in Latin. Canisius had in view in the first place the students of the Jesuit institutions, in which, as in fact in all the up-to-date institutions of the time, instruction was given in the international idiom. The *Summa* remained the basis of his catechetical works. He soon arranged a smaller edition of 122 questions, which he called *Institutiones Christianae Pietatis sive Parvus Catechismus Catholicorum*, "Instructions in Christian Piety, or Little Catholic Catechism," and he attached to it a short collection of meditations and prayers. Both these Latin books were at once translated into German. But Canisius also composed two catechisms directly in German, one of 114, the other of 47 questions and answers.

Ferdinand I, who meanwhile, after the abdication of his brother Charles V, had become emperor, prescribed the catechism for all the schools of his hereditary states. It spread rapidly through the rest of Germany. Its definite, brief, and



yet detailed information was recognized as an incalculable boon to the true religion. Its method of appealing to passages of the Bible disarmed the Protestants, who had so far imagined themselves as possessing a monopoly in the matter of utilizing and interpreting Holy Scripture. The author aimed at a full and positive explanation of the Catholic Faith, but he also explicitly attacked the errors of the day, not indeed by hurling opprobrious epithets at the erring persons—he did not even mention the names of Luther or Calvin, or the word Protestantism—but by pointing to the contrary doctrine as it was embodied in the Bible and expounded by the great teachers of the Christian past.

Outside of Germany, too, the catechism entered upon a veritable march of triumph. After a short time Canisius could truly be said to be teaching Christian doctrine not only in Latin and German, but also in French, English, Scotch, Bohemian, Polish, Spanish, Italian, Ethiopiean, Indian, and Japanese. One of the several editions published in France was begun in 1686 by order of the Archbishop of Paris and was reprinted four-hundred times. In most parts of Germany it remained the official catechism until the end of the 18th century, when Josephism forced a shallower sort of instruction upon unsuspecting populations. In many districts, however, it maintained the field until far into the nineteenth century, and there are still living such who learned their Christian doctrine from their "Canisi".

The catechism was the cause of many conversions. After Canisius' death it brought back to the fold Duke Wolfgang of Neuburg with his whole dukedom. It was one of the most powerful means employed by God to preserve and revive the Faith in Germany. Although it is now replaced by other catechisms thought to be more suitable to our own times and needs, it will ever remain a monument to its author's name, and a widely visible landmark in the development of the art of catechising.

The *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* was finished in Vienna. But much of Canisius' later work for the catechism was wedged

in between the great labors of his apostolate, and was performed in the various places to which his numerous journeys happened to take him. In this way many of his other more occasional publications originated. Thus, when he stayed for a brief space at the court of Cardinal Otto Truchsess, Bishop of Augsburg, in Dillingen, there appeared there, with some additional exhortations, the Litany of Loretto, which up to that time had been unknown in Germany. No older print of this beautiful prayer has been discovered anywhere, and investigations have made it highly probable that this Dillingen print was prepared by Canisius. His pen was ever ready. As soon as his keen eye perceived the desirability of some particular publication, he was on the spot with a well planned and carefully worked out production to meet the demand. Blessed Peter Canisius had in the best sense of the word "the writer's itch." He was not actuated by a blind passion to rush into print, but by the earnest desire to counteract the immense harm done by the countless heretical and otherwise unsound books and pamphlets which flooded the country.

#### **In Bohemia.—Canisius is made Provincial.**

On the occasion of a visit of King Ferdinand I to his kingdom of Bohemia the few prominent Catholic officials of Prague implored him to give them a college of the Society of Jesus. The religious condition of Bohemia was distressing in the extreme. Hussites of all shades, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and other heretics controlled the land, while not even the capital itself could boast of an eminent Catholic preacher. Canisius was invited to Prague, and after consultation with the leading men in Church and State he consented in the name of St. Ignatius to open the college. He wrote to Rome: "Those who are to come here must be armed with holy patience and an ardent zeal. I do not mean zeal to dispute with the heretics, but zeal to edify this country by their example. They must be prepared to sow in tears in order to reap in jubilation." These words express one of the chief principles which

guided Canisius in his apostolate.—The holy man himself once while saying Mass was greeted by a huge stone flung at him through the window, and once a man ran up to the altar to revile him.

The twelve Jesuits who arrived found themselves in great poverty. The buildings had not been finished, because the promised funds were not forthcoming, and even the means for their daily sustenance were scant. But they opened the classes, and their efficient instruction soon won the admiration and good will even of non-Catholics. The College of Prague, later on enlarged to almost gigantic dimensions, became the mother institution of a great number of others in Bohemia, Silesia, and Moravia. "From the time that the Fathers of the Society of Jesus came to Prague," writes a Bohemian bishop, "the Catholic religion began to revive and to increase gradually, so that every successive day presented a brighter aspect than the preceding." Between the years 1661—1678 the Jesuits in the abovenamed countries brought back 29,500 erring souls to the true Faith.

During his stay at Prague Father Canisius paid a flying visit to Ingolstadt. There he received the official news, that St. Ignatius had erected the foundations at Vienna, Prague, and Ingolstadt into the Province of Upper Germany, and had appointed Canisius, himself who was the soul of all the undertakings, its *first Provincial Superior*. (The members of the Society in Belgium and Cologne were to form the Province of Lower Germany.) Two weeks later the news arrived, that the Saint had finished his earthly career. The appointment of Canisius as Provincial was St. Ignatius' last gift to Germany.

The new Provincial found a heavy burden to shoulder. The three colleges were in a precarious condition financially. It was, moreover, always to be feared that an outburst of Protestant fury, especially at Prague or Vienna, or the intrigues of liberalizing Catholics might put an end to their activity. As Provincial it was his duty to inspect the several institutions from time to time, to see to the observance of the

Rules, to supply the necessary teachers, and to promote in every way possible the welfare of the houses and their individual members. He encouraged above all the spirit of prayer and of self-denial, on which, as he knew so well, everything else depended. During his administration of fourteen years Austria proper, Bohemia, and Hungary were separated from the Upper German Province and established as the Province of Austria. Canisius' influence, however, always extended much farther than his official jurisdiction. Twelve colleges—the college of those days consisted of the highschool classes and two or three years of what is called college in this country—owe their origin entirely or largely to his endeavors. These institutions he considered the most powerful agencies for a permanent reform of clergy and laity, and in them by far the majority of Jesuits in the country fulfilled their vocation by laboring in the improvement of Christian education. Father Canisius was provincial from 1555 to 1569. But even after he had been relieved of this office, he remained the actual soul of the Order in Germany by the power of his personality, his sane and unerring judgment, and his indomitable spirit of enterprise.

### The Religious "Colloquy".

Ferdinand I wished to have Father Canisius with him at the great Diet of Ratisbon in 1557, where important questions concerning religion were bound to come up. Incidentally it was understood, that while there, Canisius would give the sermons in the Cathedral. He preached on all Sundays and feastdays from the beginning of Advent to the middle of March, and during Advent he added three more sermons on weekdays. In the Diet the Protestant princes demanded, that to end the religious troubles of Germany a so-called Colloquy should be held. A number of theologians from both sides should come together, debate the controverted points, and come to some understanding. Such Colloquies had taken place several times, in Germany, Switzerland and France, but always with-

out the desired effect. Each party had claimed the victory, a new strife of pamphlets and leaflets and handbills had followed the oral duel, and on the whole the Protestants by their quibblings and noisy boasting had gained more than the Catholics.

Canisius was strongly opposed to the measure, and submitted to King Ferdinand, who at that time was still acting as Regent and Representative of Charles V at the Diet, a memorial to this effect. The ecclesiastical princes also declared that there was no prospect of reunion except through the General Council of Trent, though this Council was now not actually in session. But Ferdinand was in greatest distress. An immense army of Turks was approaching the boundaries of Austria, and there was no force to ward off the attack. The Protestants made the grant of military assistance dependent upon his consent to the Colloquy, and the king yielded, stating, however, explicitly that the Colloquy should in no way form a prejudice to the Council. Each party officially appointed speakers. Canisius and another Jesuit were among the twelve representatives of the Catholics. The Protestants chose the famous Melanchthon as leader of their deputation. The Colloquy was to be held in the city of Worms on the Rhine (see p. 2).

As some months intervened before the opening of the Colloquy, Father Canisius in the meantime went to Rome, to take part in the election of a new Superior General of the Order. But the strife between Pope Paul IV and King Philip II of Spain prevented the arrival of the Spanish deputation, and the election had to be postponed indefinitely. While the Fathers were waiting for a better turn of affairs, Canisius employed his time in patristic studies in the Eternal City. There existed an edition of the works of St. Cyprian, issued by Erasmus of Rotterdam, that erudite but shallow humanist of Luther's time, who despite an acrimonious feud with the heresiarch, and despite the saving mercy that he died a Catholic, had greatly contributed to the spread of error in Germany. Erasmus' Cyprian proved to be highly unsatisfactory, and Ca-

nisius had long ago resolved to issue a better edition. In Rome he noted down about a thousand emendations of the text, entrusting the rest of the work to his brethren. But he gave up the plan eventually, when he heard that other men were working at the same task. In fact several good editions soon appeared in Rome, Paris and Antwerp.

Germany, Catholic as well as Protestant, and in a way all Europe, eagerly looked forward to the coming Colloquy, which in the eyes of the non-Catholics stood far above the General Council in importance. A rather brilliant assembly of participants, representatives of the princes, theologians of all Creeds, interested people of all classes, gathered at Worms. For weeks the Jesuits were kept so busy that they had hardly time to say Mass and take their meals. Canisius, though not the official head, was by way of fact the intellectual leader of the Catholic deputation. On the day appointed the meetings began, and the opening speech of Melanchthon sounded like a declaration of war rather than the introductory address at a peace conference. But the fond hopes of the Protestants were scattered by a difficulty which arose from the very nature of the religious innovation. The Catholics justly insisted that only those Protestants were entitled to participate, to whom the Diet had given this right. But the Diet mentioned, besides the Catholics, only the adherents of the "Augsburg Confession," the official Creed of the Lutherans. The Catholics therefore demanded, that all their opponents should expressly declare their full assent to that document and their rejection of all doctrines contrary to it. The strict Lutherans at once approved of this proposal. But the Zwinglians, Calvinists, Osiandrists, and others loudly protested. "Then it could be seen," writes Canisius, "that the giants were erecting a Babel. God sent among them the spirit of discord, so that they fell one upon the other, and Melanchthon was torn to pieces by his own disciples." The strict Lutherans, in a towering rage, published a memorial to vindicate their own attitude, and left Worms in a body.

Thereupon the Catholics refused to continue the Colloquy, because they had no orders to debate with any but those who admitted the official Protestant Creed. Had they done so, the Orthodox Lutherans would have had a just reason to complain. To show their good will, however, the Catholic speakers consented to submit the matter to the decision of the King. Ferdinand I demanded the return of those who had left. As this could be in no way effected, the Colloquy, which had been opened with so grandiose expectations on the part of Protestantism, disbanded without even entering upon the discussion of any of the controverted subjects. Never had the internal dissensions among the Protestants, and on the other hand the glorious unity of the Catholic Church been demonstrated so efficaciously before the eyes of the whole world. *No religious Colloquy was ever again demanded by the innovators.* "From this moment", says the Protestant historian Maurenbrecher, "dates the ebb, the retrograde movement, the decline of the Protestant current in Germany."

As soon as the deliberations connected with the Colloquy began to flag, Father Canisius utilized his spare hours in giving instruction to the children in the schools. A trip to Zabern in Alsace, the residence of the Bishop of Strassburg, brought the indefatigable man to a number of Alsatian towns, where he also instructed the children and preached to the adults. He found there many people who faithfully adhered to the Church and religious practices. His interview with the bishop led to the establishment of the college of the Society at Freiburg in Breisgau.

### **Canisius and the Council of Trent.**

The Council of Trent had assembled in 1545. Two years later it was temporarily transferred to Bologna, where Canisius participated in some of the meetings of the theologians (see page 12). After it had been reopened at Trent, in 1551, its sessions were suddenly interrupted by the treacherous inroad of Maurice of Saxony into the Tyrol. It remained prorogued

until, in 1561, it was reopened again for its final and most brilliantly successful sessions by Pope Pius IV.

Canisius' whole soul was with the Council. He preached about it; he exhorted the people to pray for its success; by his order the students of the college of Vienna, and probably of all the colleges under his jurisdiction held special devotions every Monday to implore for it the divine blessing. To his utter surprise he was himself called to Trent as one of the pope's theologians. Pius IV's order was transmitted to him by Cardinal Hosius, the great defender of the Catholic cause in Poland, and now one of the presidents of the Council. The Cardinal, whose esteem for Blessed Peter bordered on veneration, was critically ill, when Canisius arrived at Trent, but at the very sight of the apostle he recovered immediately.

Besides being a member of the Commission for the Prohibition of Books Canisius took active part in the consultations of the theologians, which were held twice a day. The Blessed Sacrament was just then the subject of the debates, and in particular the question whether communion under both species should be allowed to laymen, was being spiritedly discussed. The Spaniards and Italians spoke strongly against this concession. There was a great interest, when Canisius arose. What was the German doctor going to say? Canisius thought that the chalice should never be granted generally, but it might, perhaps, be allowed to those living in non-Catholic surroundings, as the refusal would expose them to unnecessary annoyances, provided always, that the genuine doctrine of the presence of Our Lord under each species be inculcated. This view gave great satisfaction to the imperial ambassador, who wrote to his master: "The Spaniards and Italians speak learnedly, but they know nothing of our difficulties. Canisius alone hit the nail on the head." As a matter of fact, however, the Council made no regulation, but expressly committed the settlement of the question to the pope.

This decision did not please Emperor Ferdinand I. This ruler, though personally above reproach, suffered keenly at the



sight of the increasing boldness of the heretics. Many of his advisers represented the general concession of the chalice as the one great remedy against further defections, and an infallible means of regaining those already fallen away. There were also not a few echoes of the idea, once very general, that the Council is above the Pope and has power even to reform the Pope and pass laws over his head. When Canisius went back across the Alps, he and other theologians were consulted by the emperor concerning the steps to be taken in this matter. Canisius reiterated the principles he had put forth at Trent, but took occasion to remind the emperor forcibly, that there can be no salvation without close adherence to the successor of St. Peter.

But Ferdinand's mind had become confused. The religious difficulties in his hereditary estates were indeed extremely acute. Once it even seemed that he would be unable to retain the Jesuits in Vienna against the opposition that arose from various quarters. Like King Charles IX of France he had transmitted to the Council a long list of proposals and felt vexed that not each and everyone of them was taken up in the assembly. It was suggested to him to go to Trent and rattle the sabre. This step would have made the Sacred Synod appear an imperial council and would have undermined its prestige throughout the entire world. He took up his residence at Innsbruck, to be as near as possible to Trent. To Innsbruck he summoned a commission of theologians, among whom was our apostle, to aid him with their advice. Canisius prevailed on the emperor to give up the idea of going to Trent, although even Cardinals were urging him on.

But the danger was by no means over. The emperor demanded that a common memorial be submitted by the theological commission. And such was the spirit of that body, that the document jointly composed by them, of course not with the concurrence of Canisius, served only to irritate the emperor the more. Had he acted on this memorial, the very existence of the Council would have been put in jeopardy. It

might have broken up, and national synods, followed by schisms, would have been the almost infallible result, not to speak of the immense advantage that would have been afforded to the heretics by so pitiable a failure of the worldwide efforts made by the Catholic Church. Germany would have been practically lost. What should Canisius do? At first he thought of submitting a separate memorial, but finally he decided to ask for an audience. He showed the emperor in detail how unsound were the suggestions made in the memorial of the commission. He implored Ferdinand to remember his position as protector of the Church and the Papacy. Why should he not go hand in hand with Pope Pius IV, who was so seriously endeavoring to promote the renovation of Christendom? Why should he not consent to a personal interview with Cardinal Morone, the First President of the Council, who had come up to Innsbruck to show his willingness to arrive at an understanding? The emperor was overcome. The same day he paid a visit to Cardinal Morone, and the imperial demands and proposals had been so modified, that the Cardinal failed to discern in them any serious difficulty. Blessed Peter Canisius' prudence and courage had averted a grave crisis for the Tridentine Synod and the whole Church.

After the Council Pope Pius IV selected Canisius, who happened to be in Rome at the time, to take to the German bishops and Catholic princes the official decrees of the Sacred Synod and urge their execution. At the same time he was to call attention to the great importance of an Imperial Diet, which the emperor had called to meet at Augsburg in the spring of 1566. All the bishops and princes should attend it in person and be ready for the defence of the interests of the Church. Canisius was to go on his mission with all the powers and dignity of a papal delegate, but without any exterior display of pomp. Ostensibly he travelled as visitor extraordinary of the Jesuit houses in Germany.

In this disguise he journeyed to the bishops and archbishops of Würzburg, Mainz, Treves, Münster, and Osnab-

brück, and to the Duke of Jülich. Though this prince, who resided at Düsseldorf, had not fallen away from the Church, the clergy at his court could hardly be called Catholic. The zealous papal envoy tried every means to recall the duke to his duty, but seemingly in vain. With sadness in his heart he left Düsseldorf. But within three weeks he received the welcome news that the duke had banished the Protestantizing preachers, and insisted on the observance of Catholic ceremonies in his court church. Henceforward he was guided by the advice of better counsellors.

Canisius carried with him a special papal brief for the City and University of Cologne, where he was received with great honor. The pope allowed the university to draw the revenues of certain ecclesiastical benefices for the purpose of increasing its staff of professors. He then called attention to certain abuses, and the effect of this fatherly admonition was immediately noticeable.

Among the proposals which the apostolic envoy sent to Rome none was more important, than that coadjutors with the right of succession should be given to all bishops. This would forestall the troubles and risks which regularly attended the elections after the death of the incumbents of episcopal sees, and which had already led to the loss of eight bishoprics. The Holy See eventually adopted this recommendation as a principle to be followed whenever circumstances would permit.

Incidentally the trip gave a welcome opportunity to several bishops of concluding their transactions concerning the establishment of Jesuit colleges in their diocese.

While Canisius was on the lower Rhine, he could not well ignore the urgent invitations of his relatives and the magistrate of Nymwegen to honor his native city by a visit. Local historians assure us that this visit resulted in a wonderful strengthening of the Catholic part of the population in their Faith. Canisius' own numerous relatives remained Catholic under the most trying circumstances. It has recently been discovered that many of the families of the Catholic nobility of

Holland today are in some way descendants of Gisbert Canisius, brother of the saintly Jesuit.

When in Cologne the apostolic wanderer learned that Pope Pius IV had been called to his reward, a fact which ended his own powers and duties as delegate. The new Pope, St. Pius V, at once sent him word to repair to Augsburg and await the opening of the Diet.

### At the Diet of Augsburg 1566.

Emperor Maximilian II had summoned the Diet chiefly to obtain aid against an army of 200,000 Turks which threatened the eastern boundaries. But everybody knew that the irrepressible religious question would come up again, and that the Protestants would make new demands to favor the diffusion of their errors. Upon the urgent suggestion of Canisius, Pope Pius V sent a special Nuncio to Augsburg, Cardinal Commendone, a prelate who thoroughly knew German conditions. Beside Canisius two other Jesuits and two secular priests were to act as his advisers.

The Protestant princes at once declared they would refuse to grant any subsidies to the Emperor, unless two important clauses of the Religious Peace of the year 1555 were abolished. By one of these clauses the adherents of the Augsburg Confession i. e. the Lutherans alone were to be tolerated in the empire; it was now demanded that the same toleration should extend to other Protestants also. By the other clause it was ordained that if a Catholic bishop or abbot should turn Protestant he was to lose his office with its temporal possessions, though without prejudice to his private property; this so-called Ecclesiastical reservation they now desired dropped entirely. Had it not existed, the Apostate Hermann von Wied (see page 11) could have retained the temporal possessions of the See of Cologne and would have become a Protestant elector.

At first it looked as if the dissensions between the strict

Lutherans and the Calvinists etc., would break up the Protestant front, as it had been the case in the Colloquy at Worms. But the emperor waved this question, and left it entirely to the heretics to determine which parties were genuine followers of the Augsburg confession. This concession led them to drop their opposition to the Ecclesiastical Reservation. With the new imperial explanation of the first clause, the Religious Peace of 1555 was to be reenacted. But just at this juncture came, like a thunderbolt from the blue, the notification from Pius V to his legate, to oppose with a solemn protest any and every resolution which might be counter to the decisions of the Council of Trent. Was not this the case with the Religious Peace, which recognized another religion besides the Catholic? had not that document been solemnly condemned by Pope Paul IV? On the other hand, would not a protest under the present circumstances form a most powerful weapon in the hands of the opponents? Would they not point to it as a proof that the pope desired no peace? that he was meddling with the internal affairs of Germany? The emperor, known to be a lukewarm Catholic, might align himself against the papacy simply to obtain the necessary help against the Turks. Or a civil war might ensue.

Cardinal Commendone was in the greatest consternation. His advisers, above all Father Canisius, were kept busy day and night. Canisius was obliged to have himself replaced by another Father as preacher in the Cathedral. The three Jesuits and one of the secular priests, an Englishman, were convinced that the protest could not be made without grave injury to the Catholic cause. Only one of the five, an Italian, held the opposite opinion. The four convinced Commendone, that in 1555 the Catholics, being absolutely unable to enforce their just claims, had simply stated existing conditions and declared that they would refrain from an enforcement of their rights which had become an impossibility. At any rate the re-affirmation of the Religious Peace would not be against the Council of Trent. They demanded, however, that the Catholic

princes who were present at the Diet, should in some official way declare their submission to all the decisions and enactments of the Council.

A messenger was dispatched to Rome with a letter from the Legate. Canisius and his two brethren sent a separate communication to their Superior General, St. Francis Borgia. St. Francis at once conferred with Cardinal Granvella, the Spanish ambassador, who fully realized the correctness of the attitude taken by the three Jesuits, but lacked the courage to intercede with the pope. In this quandary the Jesuit General himself undertook the office of peacemaker between the German Catholics and Pius V. At first the saintly pope was utterly surprised, but, as he always did, he listened patiently to St. Francis' words. In the end he remarked he would pray for light. Francis Borgia also prayed. Two great Saints prayed. The protest was omitted. The Catholic princes at Augsburg gave before the Legate the desired solemn declaration of faithful submission. For the first time since the beginning of the religious troubles did the Catholics weather an Imperial Diet without suffering any disadvantage, on the contrary, "from this moment on," writes the Protestant Ranke, "a new life began in the Catholic Church of Germany."

#### **Canisius' Books on St. John the Baptist and the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

In 1559 the Lutheran Matthias Flacius began the publication of a gigantic Latin work on Church History, in which he intended to prove that, while Catholicism was a degeneration, the Lutheran religion represented original Christianity. It appeared in eight huge folio volumes, and is commonly referred to as the *Magdeburg Centuries* from its division of universal Church History into periods of a century each. Flacius and his many collaborators had gathered material from countless libraries and archives (sometimes cutting the passages they desired bodily out of the original). This show

of learning gave to the work a vastly overrated authority. The authors asserted numerous unproven facts and distorted others that were genuine so as to suit their preconceived purpose. The "Magdeburg Centuries" had a very large sale and did an immense amount of harm.

A number of smaller works had already been written against them, and at Rome plans were made by Cardinal Baronius to issue a complete refutation which soon began to be realized by the appearance of the first instalments of the monumental *Ecclesiastical Annals*. But for the present Pope St. Pius V wanted a book equally deep but less extensive, and he gave to Father Canisius orders to write it. Canisius was to select several individual passages or features and expose the misrepresentations and false conclusions embodied in them, thus to show in a few instances the character of the method followed by the compilers. The humble religious had his misgivings concerning his competency in the field of history, but he went with a will at the assigned task. He selected three personages, whose character had been completely disfigured by the "Centuriators," namely, St. John the Baptist, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Peter. His first step was to ask for the blessing of St. Pius V and of St. Borgias, Superior General of the Society of Jesus.

He began his studies for the work in 1567 at Dillingen, where the university library offered the best material and facilities, and where he could enjoy the advice of learned friends. Whatever he undertook throughout the whole course of his life was done thoroughly, but for this work he made almost super-human efforts. Some passages he recast as often as ten times. His brethren became seriously apprehensive for the health of the aging man. But in 1571 the first instalment, a good-sized quarto volume on St. John the Baptist, appeared and was greeted with words of sincere praise by men of prominence all over Europe. Canisius' wish for a plenary indulgence as his private reward was joyfully granted by St. Pius V.

Meanwhile the indefatigable author had been relieved of his duties as Provincial. His successor, Father Hoffaeus, was not so deeply impressed by the usefulness of work such as this. He and others were inclined to think that a man with the experience of Canisius could accomplish more good by devoting himself to preaching and teaching and to the writing of more strictly popular books. But the pope urged the continuance of the work. Canisius was, however, to his great sorrow, transferred to Innsbruck as preacher for the court of Archduke Ferdinand, a son of Emperor Ferdinand I and then ruler of the Tyrol. This office it was presumed would not interfere much with his writing. Thus he was deprived of the company of the eminent men in the university of Dillingen. And although a wagonload of books, weighing fifteenhundred pounds, followed him to his new home, this could not console him for the loss of the university library. His health, also, suffered under the influence of the Föhn, a warm wind which blows periodically on the northern slope of the Alps. But faithful to his principle he made no attempt to have the order rescinded.

In his sermons before the court he was far from imitating the example of those whom he was wont to call sugar preachers, who spoke ever of the Mercy but never of the Justice of God. He believed in pouring not only soothing oil but also sharp wine into the wounds of the sinful soul. Still he never demanded the impossible. Concerning the customs of the Carnival he said, "no king or emperor, nor even Sts. Peter and Paul, could ever succeed in abolishing them. The preacher's task will therefore be to show the people how to enjoy themselves in decency, and without committing excesses." Upon his advice a regular crusade was inaugurated against bad books. But the wise reformer insisted that it was not enough to take the heretical writings from the people; good books must be put in their place. So the government made large purchases in Augsburg. The poor received Catholic books gratis. Those who could afford it were expected to refund half of the price.



To assist the zealous author in the composition of his volume on the Blessed Virgin, Archduke Ferdinand hired a copyist, and supplied the author, moreover, with money to buy books for his studies. "It is incredible," writes Canisius' step-brother Theodoric, then a priest of the Society of Jesus (see page 3), "how much good Father Peter is bothering himself and others for this work. Everbody is surprised that he does not break down." Canisius knew that Cardinal Sirleto at Rome enjoyed the reputation of being most familiar with the Vatican library and other depositories of printed and manuscript books. To him he made bold to apply, and was happy to receive from him a number of contributions which it would have been impossible to find elsewhere.

While the author was staying a short time at Landshut, the residence of young Duke William, the later William V of Bavaria, it happened on a certain occasion that the lay-brother to whom he used to dictate, asked permission to absent himself for an hour. Canisius, buried in his thoughts, remained seated at his desk. Then he heard the door open, but it was the young duke that entered. Without looking up Canisius, presuming it was his brother, began dictating. The prince at once grasping the situation, sat down and wrote on until the brother returned. There followed, of course, much consternation and begging of pardon, all to the great glee of the duke, who modestly declared, that he was only too happy to have contributed a little to so worthy a work in honor of the Queen of Heaven.

The new volume appeared in 1577. It is a complete Mariology, treating of all questions that are connected with the dignity, position and veneration of the Virgin of Virgins. It met with even greater favor than the volume on St. John the Baptist. The Catholic critics praised in particular not only the immense erudition, solidity, and reliability of the work, but also the enthusiasm of the author for his great subject, and the piety and unction manifested in every line. In spite of its size it was reprinted a few years later and

several times in the course of the following centuries, the last edition being that of Paris which appeared in the nineteenth century.

Canisius had already gathered much material for the volume on the third object of Magdeburg misrepresentation, St. Peter, and the success he experienced with the first two volumes inspired him with the desire to finish the third one also. But Father Hoffaeus, the Provincial, thought differently. Men were too urgently needed for more direct work in the Vineyard of the Lord. The health of the celebrated author, too, seemed to be seriously on the decline. It was no small trial for good Father Canisius, to learn of the Provincial's view. But, as he had always done, he entered heartily into his superior's plan. He himself remarked, that Gregory XIII, who had succeeded St. Pius V, would easily release him from the duty imposed upon him by the latter. Thenceforward he devoted himself, as of old, to the more or less ordinary duties of the members of the Society as Preacher, catechist, and confessor. Several remarkable conversions of prominent Protestants soon were the fruit of his untiring zeal.

### A Busy Life.

The last few chapters have shown, how on several momentous occasions Blessed Peter Canisius either alone or in union with others exercised a paramount influence upon the fortunes of the Church in Germany and throughout the world. But to make the reader realize the untiring zeal of the man as well as to throw more light upon his personal character and the manysidedness of his activity, we shall now briefly recount a few other noteworthy events which happened in various years of his busy life.

When in Rome in 1568 he had several audiences with Pope Pius V, and contributed much to the appointment of a Cardinalitial Commission on German affairs, which, especially under the next pope, Gregory XIII, accomplished much in

the interest of the Church in Germany. So long as his sojourn in the Eternal City lasted, Canisius did not cease to exert influence upon the proceedings of this Commission. On one occasion the cardinals had decided to deal severely with certain German bishops. The papal briefs were ready to be despatched. Our apostle heard of it, and by his explanations and representations brought it about, that the plan was abandoned, and gentler measures were tried with eminent success.

Pius V intended to raise Canisius to the cardinalate. But the humble religious, so writes the imperial ambassador, "got wind of it, and is now beseeching the cardinals to change the pope's mind. A personal audience with the holy Father had the desired result, and Canisius was allowed to return to Germany without the cardinal's purple.

The Protestant Elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse tried to influence the Prince-Abbot of Fulda to expel the Jesuits and hand over their college to Protestant teachers. Under the pressure of rebellious subjects the abbot seems to have wavered. When Canisius received the news, he at once wrote to the Bishop of Augsburg, and through him prevailed on the duke of Bavaria and the emperor to put a stop to those machinations.

The Hapsburg rulers of the Tyrol had been for a long time engaged in a dispute with the Bishops of Trent concerning certain territorial privileges. Archduke Ferdinand, though a very pious man, (see page 37) was so convinced of his right that he would listen to no proposal even of a compromise. Upon the request of the Papal Nuncio Father Canisius made a new attempt and succeeded. Ferdinand was now ready to yield, and thus a feud, which had assumed the proportions of a standing scandal, was brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

In 1558 King Ferdinand followed his brother Charles V as emperor. But Pope Paul IV, who rightly adhered to the medieval idea of the Holy Roman Empire, could not make up his mind to recognize as emperor a man in whose election heretics had cooperated, and who claimed the imperial title

after his predecessor, Charles V, had abdicated without the pope's consent. Blind zealots helped to widen the breach between pope and emperor. In Rome Ferdinand was considered no less than a semi-heretic. "And still just now," wrote Canisius to Rome, "nobody tries more seriously to stand with a clear conscience before God and good men than this prince does." As Provincial of the Jesuits in Germany he had many Masses, prayers, and works of penance offered up to end the dissension. The Superior General of the Society also informed him that in Rome everything possible was tried for the same purpose. At last Divine Providence interfered. Paul IV, personally a blameless character, died, and under his successor, Pius IV, all the difficulties disappeared.

Since 1559 Father Canisius had been preacher at the Cathedral of Augsburg. This position was by no means a sinecure. It called for a sermon on all Sundays and Feast-days, the latter then much more numerous than now, and for three additional sermons every week during Advent and Lent. The zealous Canisius added two catechetical addresses every week all the year around. When he accepted the office hardly 8000 of the 80,000 inhabitants of the city could still be called Catholics. At first he had often no more than thirty or fifty persons present at his sermons. But their number increased rapidly. At the next Easter, there were ninehundred communions more than the year before. Slanders by the Protestants, and small nagging on the part of the very men who had enthusiastically greeted his coming were not lacking. But when seven years later he surrendered the post to one of his brethren, half the population of Augsburg was Catholic.

The boys who sang in the choir of the Cathedral of Augsburg and attended the Cathedral school were forced to find lodgings in the city among surroundings in which they were exposed to many dangers. When Canisius observed this, he suggested to the bishop the plan of founding a common home for them. He himself collected part of the funds by begging among the rich citizens and the Catholic princes who happened

to be at Augsburg for Imperial Diets. A suitable building was acquired, and Canisius composed the rules of discipline for the new institution. As preacher in the Cathedral he ever kept these poor students in sight and continued begging for them and appealing to his hearers on their behalf. "It is now cold," he once said in November, "and they need warmer clothes. Please give your contribution as you did last year. They pray and sing for us every day, and they are forbidden to beg."

In 1566 Cardinal Truchsess, Bishop of Augsburg, asked Father Canisius to spend some time at the residence of Count Helfenstein, who was considering to return to the Faith of his fathers. The count had forcibly introduced Protestantism into his district, only to find that morality was visibly declining among his people. Of himself he confessed: "Since that step I can no longer pray as I could before." Canisius stayed with him for a week and cleared up his difficulties. The apostle improved the occasion by instructing in the Catholic religion two women who were under sentence of death on the charge of witchcraft and had been abandoned by the Protestant preachers. The little County of Helfenstein has ever since remained an oasis of fervent Faith in the midst of Protestant neighbors.

In the same year we find Canisius at Würzburg to lend his assistance to the negotiations for the establishment of a Jesuit college in that city. He had to promise to give the Lenten sermons the following year. During that Lent he preached three times every week and gave besides two catechetical instructions in another church. At the same time he prepared the regulations which were to be discussed at the Diocesan Synod during Easter week.

The Roman publisher, Paul Manutius, was in possession of a privilege which prohibited under pain of excommunication the reprint of any work issued by him. Some of his publications were, of course with impunity, reprinted in Germany by Protestants, and often with grave errors and even falsifications, while the cost of transportation made his genuine works

prohibitively expensive in Germany. Canisius seized the occasion of the visit of a prominent Roman prelate to show how much this interfered with the interests of religion in Germany. After a short while Manutius saw his privileges curtailed in favor of German printers.

Pius V ordered the Jesuits of Upper Germany to prepare a German translation of the Roman Catechism (see page 36). It was written by Father Hoffaeus, but Canisius himself took great pains in revising it. About the same time a Spanish Jesuit, Jerome de Torres, consulted him concerning a Latin work, "The Creed of St. Augustine." The German Provincial saw immediately the usefulness of such a publication in the struggle with the Protestants, who constantly appealed to the great Doctor of the Church. He requested the author to have it printed in Dillingen. But he himself, upon his own responsibility, toned down several strong expressions, which the fiery Spaniard employed in treating of the heretics of the day. "Father de Torres," he said, "would not write that way if he knew Germany." (In the same spirit he prohibited in the houses under his jurisdiction the reading of the works of certain Catholic apologists who failed to keep within the bounds of charity when speaking of the religious innovators.) He also gave encouragement and assistance to the Augustinian Friar Panvino for works on the history and the antiquities of the Church, in particular Panvino's work on the catacombs.

In Rome Father Canisius saw the Latin reports of the missionaries from India, Japan, and other foreign countries. He sent some of them to Duke Albrecht of Bavaria, on whom they made a deep impression. "The Word of God," Canisius said in an accompanying letter, "is not identified with any nation. If ungrateful Christians in Germany reject it, it goes to races of which our fathers had no idea." Later on he planned a regular publication under the title of "Indian Letters." It was the beginning of a whole literature on missionary activity, a literature to which is due much of our knowledge of the

history and work of Catholic missions in all countries, America included.

In a similar way Canisius extended a helping hand to the friend of his youth, the Carthusian Lawrence Surius (see page 7). He searched the libraries to find material for Surius' Collection of the Councils, and his critical Lives of Saints. (The last-named work made Surius the forerunner of the great enterprise of the Bollandists.)

When Pope Pius V proclaimed a Jubilee to obtain God's aid against the Turks, secular and ecclesiastical authorities applied to Canisius for a detailed plan of announcing in an appropriate manner to the people this great means of winning Divine Assistance for the enterprise.

While occupied, at Innsbruck, with the writing of his work on the Blessed Virgin, he composed an instruction of the clergy of the Diocese of Brixen, concerning the administration of the sacraments. It had been discovered that many abuses had crept into these ministrations. The Vicar General sent this instruction to all the pastors.

A Zwinglian preacher, John Brunner, had been converted in consequence of his studies in the works of the early Doctors of the Church. As he was married, however, he could not think of entering the ranks of the Catholic clergy and was at a loss how to support his wife and children. Canisius procured for him a position as teacher in the university of Ingolstadt.

One of the most important foundations of St. Ignatius was the German College at Rome, which had been established for the purpose of sending well instructed and trained priests to Germany. After the holy founder's death, however, the institution suffered greatly from lack of funds. Canisius used the confidence with which Gregory XIII honored him to direct the pope's attention to its precarious condition. He was not the only one that did so. But it is remarkable, that only a few months after Canisius' departure from Rome the pope put the German College upon a sound financial basis.

During the next thirty years alone about eight hundred young Germans received in it their education for the priesthood. It has ever remained one of the exterior bonds that unite Germany with Rome, and has served as a model for similar institutions in the Eternal City and elsewhere.

Canisius had often assisted bishops and cardinals in compiling reports on the condition of Germany. One by Cardinal Truchsess has long been considered as entirely the work of Canisius. The pope expressed the desire to have one directly from the great Jesuit. In this memorial the writer gave utterance to a wish he had been cherishing for a long time, namely, that Papal Seminaries, like the German College at Rome, be established in Germany itself. Such seminaries were eventually founded in several German cities.

One of Canisius' journeys to Rome took place while he was preacher at the court of Archduke Ferdinand at Innsbruck (see page 37). When he returned he found that another court preacher had been appointed, the Franciscan John Nas. It was a keenly felt humiliation. Worst of all, good Father Nas, who was a convert and had made rather brief studies, occasionally said strange things about good works and the sacraments, and also inveighed against the Jesuits. But Canisius was far from losing his composure. The man possessed an unusual gift of popular eloquence and did an immense amount of good by his powerful if at times uncouth sermons. Only on one occasion did Blessed Peter reply in his own sermon to F. Nas' invectives, and this simply by way of stating the correct Catholic teaching and proving it from Scripture and Tradition. In a kind voice he added the remark, "This is what priests mean to say on these points. Sometimes they use strong language, and people are inclined to misunderstand them. But we should always beware of imputing to them any ignorance in theological matters." His moderation was amply rewarded. The talented friar rose to important positions in his Order and in the Church, defended religion successfully by preaching and writing, and more than



once spoke of the Society of Jesus in terms of high praise.

Blessed Peter Canisius' latest biographers concludes a similar chapter with these words: "He preaches and catechises so much, that he seems to be born exclusively for the pulpit; he writes, and he promotes literary enterprises, as if there were nothing else to engage his attention; he deals with city councils, with dukes and bishops and emperors and popes, and advises them on the most vital interests of the Church, as if he were a professional diplomat with no other occupation."

### Last Years and Holy Death.

In 1579 Pope Gregory XIII sent Bishop Bonhomini, a man filled with the spirit of love and ardent zeal, as his representative into Switzerland. While the bishop found the Canton of Freiburg still steadfastly adhering to the Catholic religion, many of its inhabitants were lukewarm in the Faith, and the Calvinism and Zwinglianism of the surrounding cantons were seriously threatening this stronghold of Catholicity. There was already a Jesuit college at Lucerne, and Bonhomini now induced the Freiburg Magistrate to invite the Order to that city also. The Upper German Province was requested to send "a man of prudence and moderation," to take the initial steps. In the beginning nobody thought of the aging Canisius. But finally it was he that was selected, and with the ready obdience that had always been so wonderfully characteristic of him he at once set out for Switzerland. The journey through the Zwinglian Canton of Bern was not without risk. But although Bonhomini, the Papal Nuncio, was subjected to petty annoyances, nobody suspected that the modest elderly man in his company was the dreaded Canisius.

The magistrates of Freiburg profusely thanked the Provincial for having given to their city a man, "whose fame resounds in all Christendom, above all in the German nation." Father Canisius here concluded a most intimate friendship with the Reverend Provost Schnewlin, of the Church of St.

Nicholas, who acted as Vicar General for the Bishop of Lausanne. The schools were eventually opened in temporary quarters. Within a few months they counted more than a hundred students, most of whom had been recalled by their parents from the Protestant schools of the neighboring French Cantons. It was only a few years, until the college building, a substantial, well-planned structure, arose. But Canisius did not live to see the splendid new college church of St. Michael the Archangel.

For several years the indefatigable preacher continued to announce the Word of God from the pulpit. Thus for the period from March 12 to May 28, 1581, no less than thirty-seven sermons are still extant in manuscript. He also explained the Christian doctrine to the children in the streets of the city. One of the results of the new efforts made at Freiburg by the Jesuits, the Franciscans, and the many zealous secular priests, was an astounding increase in the number of communions. For all the priests Canisius for many years gave conferences on Cases of Conscience, which were always well attended. But in the course of time he was obliged to confine himself to the private instruction of individuals, in particular of prospective converts, who were, for the most part, poor immigrants from Protestant Cantons.

Meanwhile he induced the ecclesiastical and secular authorities to inaugurate a crusade against heretical books, and to revive the old custom that at the beginning of Lent every citizen should publicly renew his Profession of Faith. He could no longer make extensive journeys, but the influence of his advice and direction extended over all Switzerland. St. Charles Borromeo desired to take him along as companion on a journey of visitation in the Grisons, the eastern part of the country, and as this was impossible asked him for his views on a number of practical questions. Canisius, by several letters to Rome, prevented the excellent Provost Schnewlin from resigning his office of Vicar General, and even caused him to be appointed Apostolic Visitor of the Canton, a measure which

resulted in an immense amount of good. St. Francis of Sales, not as yet Bishop of Geneva, wrote to Blessed Peter a very flattering letter and wished to enter into a correspondence with him.

Nor did Canisius' pen rest. He published brief biographies of Sts. Ida, Meinrad, Fridolin, Beatus, Ursus, Maurice, and of Blessed Nicholas von der Flüe, all of whom had sanctified Switzerland by their holy lives. To procure material for these booklets, he procured manuscripts from libraries as far distant as Fulda. A collection of "Catechism Hymns," an Instruction for Confession, and an exposition of the Psalm *Miserere* are other fruits of his untiring apostolic zeal. A little "Catholic Manual" was thirty times reprinted and soon translated into other languages. He also composed a Latin "Prayerbook for Princes" which in handwritten copies was used by the members of the Austrian, Bavarian, and Spanish dynasties. The most extensive work of this last period of the great writer's activity was a volume of Latin notes on the Gospels of the Sundays and Feastdays, by which he sought to give assistance to preachers. It should still be noted that during this time the man of labor and prayer gave the usual instructions to the members of his religious community. He even assisted in the lowly domestic occupations, and might be seen washing dishes in the kitchen, or with a broom sweeping the corridors of the house.

The more he realized his increasing inability to work, the more time did he give to devotion. Here is the place to state that nothing, perhaps, is more remarkable in this great man than his continuous spirit of prayer. In spite of his restless activity, with his many and far-reaching plans, with his many irons in the fire, during the more than fifty years of his public career, he never neglected his own soul. He found time to make a surprisingly large number of notes concerning his spiritual progress; he jotted down his resolutions and points for meditation, drew up sets of questions for his examination of conscience, composed prayers for various occasions and intentions, wrote out lists of institutions and persons for whom

he determined to pray, or litanies of Saints whom he was wont to invoke. Among them stood out prominently the Guardian Angels and heavenly Patrons of the cities and countries, for which he and his brethren were laboring. He enumerated in a kind of auto-biography, which he called his Testament, the many favors received from God during his long life. A very large place he gave to the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He had composed for himself morning and night prayers in Its honor and a short invocation to be repeated every hour.

His prayer was a real conversation with God. Once a young member of the Order thought he heard loud speaking in the room of Father Canisius which was next to his own. Fearing the good Father might be in some distress he went out and listened at the door. Blessed Peter was conversing with God. He pleaded with Him, remonstrated with Him, argued with Him, sometimes raising his voice and proving to Him that certain things had to be granted. The young man at once made up his mind not to get involved in this duel between Canisius and Almighty God. "The two will soon again come to an understanding," he reflected as he retired to his own room.

The spirit of prayer is one of the great characteristics which Blessed Peter possessed in common with St. Boniface, the first Apostle of Germany. Like him, too, he possessed an unswerving attachment to the Holy See, and the conviction that only through St. Peter and his successors could salvation come to Germany. Like him, moreover, he understood the necessity of solid study and of schools for the education of the young.

Canisius had always shown great love for the members of other religious Orders. In Switzerland the Capuchins attracted his attention by their efficient work among the people. Although they possessed no house in Freiburg, he had the consolation of seeing two Capuchin priests, together with his own brethren, present at his death.

On the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle he received the Last Sacraments. To Provost Werro, the noble successor of his friend Schneulin, he recommended the Church of Freiburg. He spoke similarly to two members of the Cantonal Council. Then he took the booklet in which he had written his familiar devotions and said the prayer for a happy death. Suddenly he cried out, "Don't you see? don't you see there?" and began to say the rosary. It is presumed that he was favored by an apparition of the Blessed Virgin. The simple assurance of the Rector of the house, that his brethren were praying for him, gave him joy. He asked that they should say the Penitential Psalms. During these prayers, about four o'clock in the afternoon, December 27, 1597, Peter Canisius closed his life of Love for God and men, of prayer and penance and indefatigable labor. He was buried, amid an immense concourse of people, in the church of St. Nicholas whence his remains were later on transferred into the church of the Jesuit college.

The news of his death reechoed far and wide. Within a short time his life was written and read practically in all the languages and countries of Europe and in the foreign missions. And people prayed to him. In 1655 a publication, with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities, reported in detail more than eighty cases in which remarkable favors had been obtained through his intercession. In 1741 the number had risen to two hundred and fifty. About this time the procedure for the beatification of the Servant of God was taken up. But the storm that broke upon the Society of Jesus a little later, and the political and ecclesiastical convulsions which followed in the wake of the French Revolution caused the matter to be dropped for another hundred years. On November 20, 1864, however, Pope Pius IX proceeded to the solemn act of enrolling Peter Canisius among the Blessed, to the joy of the Catholics of Holland, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and of all those who love the religion he so ably defended. Fifty years later, when the golden Jubilee of the beatification was celebrated at Freiburg, Pope Leo XIII granted that the relics of

Blessed Peter be carried in procession, a privilege ordinarily reserved to the canonized Saints. The only difficulty which stands in the way of his canonization is the lack of new miracles. But there is at present a crusade of prayers going on in the countries he benefited so much and in other countries of the Catholic world that it may please Almighty God to show the power of His arm by removing this obstacle and thus making possible the canonization of His servant, Blessed Peter Canisius.



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(F. Braunsberger devoted a lifetime to the gathering and publication of the letters of Bl. Peter Canisius and other sources of his life. Eight volumes are in print. The ninth is ready for the press. But under present conditions in Germany, it will require 75,000 Marks to have it printed. F. Braunsberger is endeavoring to secure this sum.)

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